

Moraine in the western half of the County and in scattered small areas throughout the remainder of the County.

PRAIRIES

Prairies are open, treeless or generally treeless areas dominated by native grasses. Such areas have important ecological and scientific value and consist of four basic types: low prairies, mesic or moderately moist prairies, dry prairies, and oak openings. The low prairies typically occupy ancient glacial lake beds; mesic prairies tend to occur on glacial outwash plains, the glacial till of recessional moraines, and the loessial, windblown depositional soils which cover the dolomitic bedrock; dry prairies occur on well-drained soils, usually on steep hillsides; oak openings are savannahs dominated by dry prairie grasses, with between one and 17 oak trees, usually bur oaks, per acre.

Prairies existing in 1990 are shown on Map 25, with 34 sites covering a combined total of approximately 280 acres, a very small portion of the total land area of the County, located mostly in the southwestern quarter of the County. Very few native prairies are left in Waukesha County, although they once covered large portions of the County. The loss of native prairie and oak openings was primarily a result of agricultural practices, urbanization, and the suppression of the wildfires which had served to restrain the advancing shrubs and trees which shade out prairie plants.

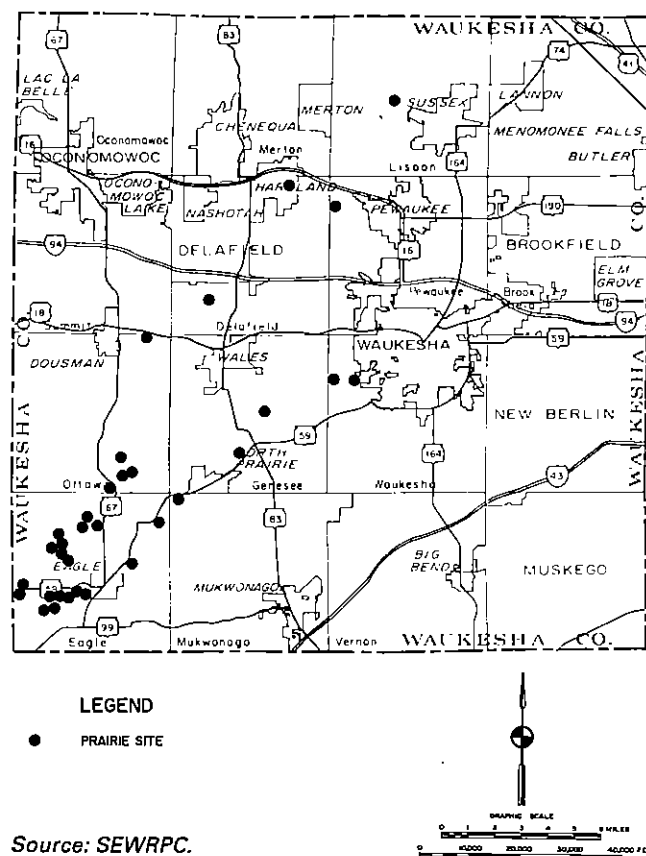
WILDLIFE HABITAT

Wildlife in Waukesha County includes such upland game and nongame species as rabbit, squirrel, and woodchuck; predators such as fox and raccoon; game birds, including pheasant; and such marsh furbearers as muskrat. Other nongame species include such songbirds as the cardinal and wood thrush, and such marsh and shorebirds as the great blue heron and killdeer. In addition, waterfowl are present and deer are found in some areas. The remaining habitat and its wildlife residents provide opportunities for recreational, educational, and scientific activities and constitute an aesthetic asset to the County.

The complete spectrum of wildlife species native to Waukesha County has, along with its habitat, undergone tremendous alterations since the settlement of the County. The change is the direct result of alteration of the environment of the County by

Map 25

PRAIRIES IN WAUKESHA COUNTY



European settlers, beginning with the clearing of forests and prairies and the draining of wetlands and ending with extensive agricultural and urban land uses. This process, which began in the early 19th century, is still operative today. Successive cultural uses and attendant management practices, both rural and urban, have been superimposed on the land and have also affected the wildlife and wildlife habitat. In agricultural areas, these cultural management practices include draining land by ditching and tiling and the expanding use of fertilizers and pesticides. In the urban areas, cultural management practices that affect wildlife and their habitat are the use of fertilizers and pesticides, road salting, heavy traffic producing disruptive noise levels and damaging air pollution, and the introduction of domestic animals.

Inventories of wildlife habitat in the Southeastern Wisconsin Region were conducted jointly by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning

Commission in 1985. As a part of the 1985 inventory, three classes of wildlife habitat were identified: Class I (high-value) wildlife habitat, Class II (medium-value) wildlife habitat, and Class III (other significant) wildlife habitat. Class I habitat areas contain a good diversity of wildlife, are adequate in size to meet all of the habitat requirements for the species concerned, and are generally located in proximity to other wildlife habitat areas. Class II wildlife habitat areas generally lack one of the three criteria for Class I wildlife habitat. However, they do retain a good plant and animal diversity. Class III wildlife habitat areas are remnant in nature in that they generally lack two of the three criteria for a Class I wildlife habitat, but may, nevertheless, be important if located in proximity to high- or medium-value wildlife habitat areas, if they provide corridors linking higher-value wildlife habitat areas, or if they provide the only available range in the area.

Wildlife habitat areas encompassed a combined area of 182 square miles, or 31 percent of the total area of the County in 1985. As indicated on Map 26, these areas are concentrated on the Kettle Moraine, in the Vernon Marsh, along Scuppernong Creek and the Scuppernong River, and around the major lakes in the County. As indicated in Table 37, Class I wildlife habitat encompassed 88 square miles, or 49 percent of total wildlife habitat; Class II wildlife habitat encompassed 61 square miles, or 33 percent of total wildlife habitat; and Class III wildlife habitat encompassed 33 square miles, or 18 percent of total wildlife habitat.

NATURAL RESOURCE BASE RELATED ELEMENTS

Natural resource base related elements include major park and open space sites, historic sites, and natural area sites. These sites and areas, while not strictly defined as part of the natural resource base, are generally linked to, and encompass parts of, that underlying natural resource base. Such sites and areas are described in this section.

Major Park and Open Space Sites

The large State- and County-owned park and open space sites, as well as certain large City parks in Waukesha County, generally provide a wide variety of natural resource-related outdoor recreation facilities serving residents throughout the County. In addition, these large sites serve to protect natural resources and often encompass significant

Table 37

WILDLIFE HABITAT IN WAUKESHA COUNTY: 1985

Class of Wildlife Habitat	Area Encompassed		
	Square Miles	Percent of Total Wildlife Habitat	Percent of Total Area of County
Class I (high-value)	88.4	48.6	15.2
Class II (medium-value)	60.1	33.1	10.4
Class III (other significant)	33.2	18.3	5.7
Total Wildlife Habitat	181.7	100.0	31.3
Not Wildlife Habitat	398.9	--	68.7
Total	580.6	--	100.0

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and SEWRPC.

woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat within the primary environmental corridors in the County. Such sites have been termed major park and open space sites, defined as those sites 100 acres or larger in area. Information on the major park and open space sites in the County is presented in this section. It is important to note that, while the smaller, less than 100-acre, municipal park and open space sites provide outdoor recreation facilities such as ball diamonds and play areas, such sites generally serve local urban community and neighborhood areas and generally do not encompass significant natural resources. Therefore, while these sites are important in meeting local outdoor recreation and open space needs, detailed information on them was not considered necessary for the preparation of the County development plan.

As shown on Map 27 and indicated in Table 38, there were 19 major public park and open space sites encompassing a combined total of 17,348 acres, or about 27 square miles, in Waukesha County in 1993. These sites represented about 5 percent of the total area of the County. As further shown on Map 27, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources maintained four major park and open space sites encompassing about 13,645 acres, or about 21 square miles, in Waukesha County. These sites included the Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit, Vernon Marsh Wildlife Area; Kettle Moraine State Forest-Lapham Peak Unit; and Scuppernong Wildlife Area. Waukesha County maintained 11 major park and open space sites encompassing a combined total of 2,977 acres, or about 4.7 square miles. These sites included Menomonee Park, Minooka Park, Mukwonago Park, Mus-